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REPORT OF
THE MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION
COMMISSION, 1933

LETTER
FROM
THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

TRANSMITTING
REPORT OF THE MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION
COMMISSION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR
ENDING JUNE 30, 1933



JANUARY 3, 1934.—Referred to the Committee on Agriculture
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MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Hon. Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture (chairman).
Hon. Daniel C. Roper, Secretary of Commerce.
Hon. Harold Ickes, Secretary of Interior.
Hon. Key Pittman, Senator from Nevada.
Hon. Peter Norbeck, Senator from South Dakota.
Hon. S. D. McReynolds, Representative from Tennessee.
Hon. Roy O. Woodruff, Representative from Michigan.
Rudolph Dieffenbach, Bureau of Biological Survey (secretary).

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION,
Washington, December 26, 1933.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: In accordance with the provisions of section 3 of the act of Congress approved February 18, 1929 (45 Stat. 1222; U.S. Code, suppl., chap. 7a), I present herewith report of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1933.

Respectfully,

H. A. WALLACE,
Secretary of Agriculture,
Chairman Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.



REPORT OF THE MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 1933

Four years have passed since the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (45 Stat. 1222; U.S. Code, suppl., chap. 7a) went into effect. The 10-year program of refuge establishment contemplated expenditures aggregating \$7,875,000, and the necessary appropriations were authorized by the act. The total of the authorizations for these 4 years was \$1,875,000, but of this sum only \$993,000 has been made available.

The first year's operations were devoted to a Nation-wide investigation of refuge possibilities, and to commitments for the acquisition of the San Luis Lake Refuge in Colorado and the Cape Romain Refuge in South Carolina, and to measures preliminary to the setting aside by Executive order of the Benton Lake Refuge in Montana and the Salt Plains Refuge in Oklahoma. Steady progress continued to be made in the succeeding years on examination and appraisal of lands and acquisition of desirable refuge sites within the limits of the appropriations made.

STATUS OF PROGRAM AT END OF YEAR

At the close of the fiscal year 1933 there had been examined 3,710,927 acres of land in 141 units, distributed among the 48 States, and there have been acquired by purchase, gift, Executive order, proclamation, act of Congress, or by lease, cession, or option to purchase a total of 22 refuges, comprising 1,084,683 acres.

Because of limitations resulting from the depression, the appropriation for the fiscal year 1933 amounted to only \$318,000 instead of the \$1,000,000 authorized by the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The effect of this was decidedly to curtail progress. From the standpoint of accomplishments and benefit to the migratory birds, this was a serious matter, because of the urgent need of more refuges and the low prices at which suitable areas, many of inferior agricultural land, could be acquired.

Table 1 sets forth the results of acquisition work of migratory bird refuge areas to the close of the fiscal year 1933.

ACQUISITIONS APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION, 1933

At the meeting of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission on December 8, 1932, the Secretary of Agriculture presented a program of proposed acquisitions recommended by the Chief of Bureau of Biological Survey. The Commission authorized the purchase and lease of these lands, which included additions to the Crescent Lake Refuge in Nebraska, the Long Lake Refuge in North Dakota, and the Bamforth Lake and Hutton Lake Refuges in Wyoming. The only new refuge proposed was the Sacramento Migratory Bird Refuge, on

the Spalding Ranch, in California, so designated because of its location in the Sacramento Valley and its proximity to the city of Sacramento.

At the December meeting most of the proposed acquisitions were in the nature of leases with the option to purchase. The principal necessity for pursuing such a policy at this time has been the curtailment of funds to carry out the refuge-purchase program; it was hoped that the appropriations to be made for the ensuing fiscal year would be sufficiently large to exercise the purchase options on the tracts placed before the Commission. This hope, however, was not realized; only sufficient funds were made available to pursue work incident to previous commitments, including boundary surveys and title examinations of tracts that had been taken under purchase agreement, and to conduct other necessary miscellaneous field and office work incident to the refuge acquisition program.

On May 23, 1933, a second meeting of the Commission was held for the purpose of considering the possibility of stimulating migratory-bird refuge acquisitions under the Emergency Conservation Act of March 31, 1933. The feasibility of carrying out such a program has been given consideration, but final decision with reference thereto had not been reached by the end of June.

SACRAMENTO MIGRATORY BIRD REFUGE

The Sacramento Migratory Bird Refuge, containing 5,609 acres, is situated in Glenn County, Calif., about 6 miles south of Willows. Prior to settlement and reclamation the Sacramento Valley was the focal point for countless thousands of migratory waterfowl. The advance of population and the reclamation of vast expanses of lowlands for intensive agricultural use have largely destroyed this wild-fowl habitat.

Such minor areas as are not susceptible to agricultural development have been taken over by hunting clubs or by individuals for gunning purposes. The Spalding ranch has for years been used for rice production, and after the harvest for sheep grazing. During the open seasons only restricted hunting has been permitted by the owners. Because of its special attraction to geese, this tract is preeminent. It is also as attractive to the smaller waterfowl as are the other highly favored concentration areas in other parts of the Sacramento Valley.

As the funds with which to consummate purchase of the lands were insufficient during the fiscal year 1933, the property was taken under lease until August 30, 1933, with option to buy within the lease period. Unfortunately, however, sufficient funds were not made available for the ensuing fiscal year, and the property therefore had to be eliminated from the refuge program.

REFUGES ESTABLISHED BY LAW OR EXECUTIVE ORDER

BOULDER CANYON, ARIZONA-NEVADA

The Boulder Canyon Wild Life Refuge, set aside by Executive order of March 3, 1933, is superimposed on part of the land and water area withdrawn for the Boulder Canyon project for river regulation, flood control, irrigation, domestic water uses, and power development. The water areas within the refuge will be an oasis in an otherwise arid country on one of the southwestern bird-migration routes, a

way station from the Malheur and Klamath Lake Refuges in Oregon and the Bear River Refuge in Utah to the Salton Sea Refuge in southern California. The value of this great refuge of 620,000 acres is enhanced by its geographic position, and a more favorable place for preserving and enjoying the close presence of aquatic and other wild life could not be found in the whole region.

WIDOWS ISLAND, MAINE

Widows Island is about $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles east of North Haven, Maine, in Fox Island Thoroughfare, and jurisdiction over it was transferred from the Navy Department to the Department of Agriculture by act of Congress, approved December 22, 1932. It will be used not only as a resting place for migratory birds, but as a base from which the Biological Survey's game protectors may more effectively operate along the coast of Maine in enforcing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

LENORE LAKE, WASHINGTON

An area at Lenore Lake, Wash., has as yet been given only cursory examination, so that full knowledge regarding its present or potential value is not available. The public lands in proximity to the lake have been temporarily withdrawn pending a more thorough study of the wild-life refuge opportunities there.

RAILROAD VALLEY, NEVADA

More than 135,000 acres of land have been temporarily withdrawn for refuge purposes in Railroad Valley, in the central part of Nevada. Although this region is arid, many migratory birds fly over it both in spring and in fall. To provide resting places for the wild fowl, it has been hoped to develop the underground water resources by sinking artesian wells and impounding the flow in small lakes and ponds. Lack of funds has thus far prevented the exploration work prerequisite to such development.

ROSWELL, N. MEX.

The lands embraced within the Roswell unit in New Mexico have been temporarily withdrawn pending opportunity to make a thorough study of their migratory-bird refuge possibilities. If the plans here prove feasible this will make a valuable addition to the network of refuges planned.

SEMIDI ISLANDS, ALASKA

The Semidi Islands Wild Life Refuge, located in the North Pacific Ocean southeast of the Alaska Peninsula, and set aside by Executive order of June 17, 1932, consists of 2 large and 7 small islands ranging from 1,200 to 1,500 feet high, and aggregating 8,290 acres. These islands are used extensively by winter wrens, murre, and several other species of bird life as rookeries and resting grounds. An inviolate sanctuary here will protect for all time the several species of important migratory birds that seek these islands for nesting and resting purposes.

During the year it became necessary by reason of local complications for the Biological Survey to drop from the acquisition program the San Luis Lake Refuge in Colorado and the Hempstead Refuge in New York.

TABLE 1.—*Refuge areas acquired and approved for acquisition under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act program to June 30, 1933*

State and county	Refuge	Areas approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for purchase and lease-purchase				Other areas acquired	Total
		Acquired by purchase	Pending title conveyance		Total		
			Under purchase agreement	Leased			
		Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres
Alaska.....	Semidi Islands.....					¹ 8,290	8,290
Arizona: Mohave.....	Boulder Canyon (See also Nevada).					¹ 312,687	312,687
California: Imperial.....	Salton Sea.....	8,982			8,982	¹ 36,578	45,560
Florida:							
Levy.....	Cedar Keys.....					¹ 224	224
Hernando.....	Chinsegut Hill.....					² 2,033	2,033
Jefferson, Taylor, and Wakulla.....	St. Marks.....	19,313			19,313	¹ 16,298	35,611
Georgia: McIntosh.....	Wolf Island.....					¹ 538	538
Maine: Knox.....	Widows Island.....					³ 12	12
Maryland: Dorchester.....	Blackwater.....	8,241			8,241		8,241
Montana: Cascade and Choteau.....	Benton Lake.....					¹ 12,235	12,235
Nebraska: Garden.....	Crescent Lake.....	40,609			40,609	¹ 173	40,782
Nevada:							
Clark.....	Boulder Canyon (See also Arizona).					¹ 346,443	346,443
Churchill.....	Fallon.....		3,788	9,594	13,382	¹ 14,114	27,496
Nye.....	Railroad Valley.....					¹ 135,184	135,184
New Mexico: Chaves.....	Roswell.....					¹ 1,962	1,962
North Carolina: Hyde.....	Swanquarter Bay.....	15,341	151		15,492		15,492
North Dakota: Burleigh and Kidder.....	Long Lake.....	4,810	160	2,014	6,984	¹ 41,810	8,794
Oklahoma: Alfalfa.....	Salt Plains.....					¹ 19,453	19,453
South Carolina: Charleston.....	Cape Romain.....	22,448			22,448	¹ 31,613	54,061
Utah: Box Elder.....	Locomotive Springs.....					¹ 1,031	1,031
Washington: Grant.....	Lenore Lake.....					¹ 4,682	4,682
Wyoming:							
Albany.....	Bamforth Lake.....	965			965	¹ 41,199	2,164
Do.....	Hutton Lake.....	1,248			1,248	¹ 4,460	1,708
Total.....		121,957	4,099	11,608	137,664	947,019	1,084,683

¹ By Executive order or proclamation.² By gift.³ By act of Congress.⁴ By lease without option to purchase; acquisition approved by the Commission.⁵ By cession.

Incident to the acquisition of lands and the demarcation and monumenting of boundaries of areas taken under administration there have been surveyed 287 miles of boundary and subsidiary lines during the year.

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURES

Of the \$3,725.60 available for the expenses of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, \$310.80 was expended for travel and subsistence of ex-officio members from State game departments, \$333.34 for stenographic services, and \$75.22 for printing, the whole totaling \$719.36.

Of the \$318,000 available to the Biological Survey for the administration of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, \$44,782 was expended for the employment and traveling expenses of personnel engaged on the examination of areas deemed suitable for refuges, and for purchase negotiations, title examinations, and topographic, cadastral, and improvement surveys, and for map making. Other expenditures covered acquisition of lands, administration of refuges, purchase of equipment and miscellaneous items.

Progress in the acquisition of refuges has been far behind the program contemplated by the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. During the delays many species of wild fowl have been diminishing at an alarming rate, and this has been partly due to overshooting and the fact that too few inviolate sanctuaries have been provided as nesting, resting, and feeding places for migratory birds.

All the refuges acquired up to this time and most of those contemplated for acquisition should be further developed by improvement works in order to make them more useful for their major service. These improvements would involve the introduction of suitable plant life, now deficient, improvement cuttings on forested areas, and construction of dikes and canals for water control. Such developments and the dedication of extensive water areas to the use of waterfowl will contribute to the retardation of the run-off of water and the prevention of floods and soil erosion. In addition, the refuges already acquired and those contemplated for acquisition not only may well serve their major purpose in the conservation of wild life, but, through the more appropriate utilization of inferior agricultural lands, may also play an important part in the conservation of forests, soil, and water.







